

Bimonthly Records and Information Discussion Group (BRIDG) Meeting Summary
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., September 18, 2001
Department of Energy, Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC

**TOPIC: “Current Recordkeeping and Records Use
within the Federal Government Project”**

Approximately 45 people attended the latest BRIDG meeting on September 18, 2001. Michael L. Miller, Director of Modern Records Programs, welcomed the participants and thanked the Department of Energy for hosting the meeting.

In his welcoming address, Mike Miller recognized that many records officers were directly affected by the September 11th terrorist attacks. Participants observed a moment of silence for the victims of this national tragedy.

Update on Current Recordkeeping and Records Use within the Federal Government Project – Dr. Lewis Bellardo, Deputy Archivist of the United States

Dr. Lewis Bellardo, Deputy Archivist of the United States discussed the status of the Current Recordkeeping and Records Use within the Federal Government Project. He began by reviewing the data collection process that began last December in an attempt to develop an accurate understanding of current practices of creation, use, maintenance, and disposition of records.

There were two parts to the data collection. In part one, the NARA contractor, SRA, interviewed CIOs, General Counsels and Inspector General staff, and held focus group meetings with records users and creators about their views and perceptions concerning records management. The contractor was also responsible for a web survey that had excellent results, with 70% participation in agencies throughout the DC area. In the second data collection, NARA staff visited agencies and examined work processes and records (a process we are calling “Records Systems Analyses,” or “RSAs.”) to determine how records are actually being managed. In order to have better coverage of the different types of Federal agencies and work processes, NARA is doing four additional RSAs.

The contractor will utilize data collected by both groups to submit a final, comprehensive report in December.

Dr. Bellardo shared some broad findings that will be further illuminated in the report. It was generally stated that the better defined and exacting a process, the more likely the records were being kept in accordance with disposition authorities. The less defined and more staff involved in a process, the more likely it was that records dispositions and authorities were not being properly implemented. Additionally, the more risk that is associated with a process, the more staff was inclined to have well defined procedures and records management practices.

These findings allude to several issues that NARA may need to examine. First, since it may be difficult to accommodate the needs of all Federal agencies in general guidance, NARA may need to develop different approaches for providing more specific guidance. Dr. Bellardo stated that he

wants to move ahead in some areas while we wait for the contractor report. For example, NARA needs to work with libraries and the Government Printing Office to be sure Government publications are appropriately disseminated and preserved. NARA is also moving ahead on web guidance and transfer standards for electronic records.

In response to remarks on the web survey about NARA's leadership role, one participant interjected that it would be good for NARA to be an advocate for records management with legislative and policy making groups and to encourage integrated information management in the Federal Government.

Dr. Bellardo also asked attendees for ideas on gaining entry into some agencies. Records Officers suggested that NARA work around the peak times for an agency, even if it required waiting six to eight months to gain access. NARA should also obtain contacts beyond the core person in case they cannot schedule interviews with the person originally identified.

Dr. Bellardo concluded his presentation by stating that he will keep records officers up-to-date on the project and thanked them for their support. Any ideas or questions should be directed to Susan Cummings, Policy and Communications Staff at 301 713-7360, ext. 238, or by email at susan.cummings@nara.gov.

NARA's Gaps Project – Bill LeFurgy

Bill LeFurgy, Modern Records Program, presented a report on the Gaps project.

Brief Review of Vital Records – Mike Miller

Because of recent events, Mike Miller addressed the audience on what NARA currently offered, and what NARA would offer in the future on vital records.

Mike Miller recommended that record officers look at the NARA website for the updated guidance on vital records and disaster recovery (www.nara.gov/records/vital.html). He also suggested looking at the web sites of several agencies that have good vital records and disaster recovery programs such as the EPA, Navy, USDA and Bonneville Power Administration.

Federal agencies in the New York City area that need assistance should contact the NARA-Northeast Region records management staff. The primary contact for assistance in the New York City area is Diane LeBlanc, the Regional Administrator for the NARA Northeast Region. Ms. LeBlanc can be reached at 781 647-8745. NARA's DC office is working with the Pentagon and has offered Washington National Records Center's drying chamber as well as office space to Pentagon employees. Record officers were also encouraged to contact their appraisal archivist (contact information available at: <http://www.nara.gov/records/comm/workgrp.html>.)

Regional offices regularly provide Disaster Recovery and Vital Records training. Locations can be found on the NARA website at http://www.nara.gov/records/tb_nr99.html#DPR.

NARA Headquarters is also considering Vital Records training and asked participants to send a message to the records management mailbox (recmgmt@nara.gov) to express their interest. Along with regular training, NARA is considering a free symposium on various aspects of vital records and disaster recovery. Topics under consideration are a review of current guidance, promoting a vital records program to staff and management, and providing examples of successful operation programs.

Suggestions for Future Briefings on CD-ROM – Mike Miller

Mike Miller stated that NARA was considering offering a CD-ROM presentation at RACO that would be similar to the PowerPoint presentation entitled, “Everything You Need to Know about Records – A Briefing for Managers.” In response to his request for suggested topics, audience members said that they would like to see a presentation on records management for IT staff. Jean Keeting, NWM, stated that she was hoping that the IT GRS would be out by May which may assist agencies in talking to IT staff.

Review of Agency-Proposed Priorities for NARA Guidance Concerning Electronic Records Issues – Mike Miller

In response to previous requests for NARA to provide assistance to Federal agencies, six major issues have been identified. Mike Miller reviewed these items to verify that he understood the questions and gave updates, if available, on the following items:

- **Public Key Infrastructure (PKI).** Agencies want storage requirements and good recordkeeping practices for digital signatures. Agencies would like guidance at a useful level.
- **Systems certified by Department of Defense (DoD) Standard 5015.2.** Agencies are interested in NARA releasing a report on DoD certified COTS software and successful electronic record keeping projects.
- **Budgetary aspects of implementing an electronic recordkeeping system.** Agencies would like to know what the costs are for implementing an electronic recordkeeping system (ERK). NARA realizes that the costs of these systems are not really articulated in any guidance because there are specific agency processes and costs to consider when implementing an ERK.
- **Acceptable and unacceptable transfer formats for all electronic systems.** Agencies want current guidance for each format and assistance for designing future systems.
- **VCR tapes.** Agencies want guidance on storage and converting to professional-quality tapes for permanent series.
- **Permanent versus temporary electronic records systems.** Agencies would like assistance in determining what of their current systems produce permanent electronic records that NARA would like to accession.

Mike Miller asked for clarification on whether NARA was answering the right questions and if there were other topics that should be addressed. One member of the audience asked for training for the information technology professional. Miller responded that this could be a consideration for the training staff.

To capitalize on where NARA was right now with these issues, Miller stated that they were considering the legal force of FAQs versus bulletins, especially in regards to web guidance. One reaction to this idea was that some higher-level staff do not pay attention to communications unless they are in outlined in a formal bulletin. It was also suggested that guidance be produced as NARA - "endorsed", "practice", or "suggested."

This led to a brief discussion on what type of guidance agencies need in regards the DoD 5015.2 Standard. Miller stated that what NARA has found through the current pilot with TruArc is that it depends on what the agency is trying to do, and how the implementation works with their architecture. He further stated that the NARA pilot runs through the end of October and that NARA would be providing lessons learned. Topics will probably include development of file plans, record definitions, and record schedules.

NARA Updates – Mike Miller

- Quicksilver is a large government wide, information technology initiative, headed by Mark Foreman, of the Office of Management and Budget. This initiative will address recordkeeping in the Federal Government as a whole rather than looking at specific agencies. The initiative will be looking at content across the Government, recordkeeping requirements, and system requirements. It will investigate how these systems can operate with each other. FIRM was also involved in providing input on the communication of information across Federal agencies.
- Bette Fugitt, Department of Agriculture, provided FIRM updates. Bette mentioned that they are trying to update the FIRM website on a weekly basis, which can be found at www.ocio.usda.gov/irm/records.
- The next BRIDG meeting will be held Thursday, November 15, 2001 at the Department of Energy, Forrestal Building. Additional information will be available on the NARA records management web site at <http://www.nara.gov/records/>, as well as via Agency Records Officer memos. Attendees must register in advance.